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REFLECTIONS ON FOSTERING LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT IN EDUCATION: PERSPECTIVES FROM THE URAL STATE PEDAGOGICAL UNIVERSITY

KEYWORDS: leadership, education, development, contradictions and risks, structural model, cluster.

ABSTRACT. The article presents the experience of Ural State Pedagogical University (USPU) in its training education leaders over past years. It describes the trends in development of pedagogical education, challenges and peculiarities in the training educational leaders. The reasons for prioritization of pedagogical education are given. The need of modernization of pedagogical education and preparation of the leaders in education is outlined in view of inconsistent results of previous years. Different practices and foundations are used for leader education. Not only professionals or administrators can be leaders, but educational institutions can be leaders as well. Our model of education of leaders embraces two different kinds of leadership – administrative and professional, which is based on harmony and combination of variations emphasizing the cultural constituent of the leader. Leadership issues are closely related to the practical goal of professional development. From this point of view, the status of the pedagogical university, the influence of USPU on various socio-cultural spheres of the region as a key university of an educational cluster is evaluated.

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РАЗМЫШЛЕНИЯ О СОВЕРШЕНСТВОВАНИИ ПОДГОТОВКИ ЛИДЕРОВ ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ: ВЗГЛЯД УРАЛЬСКОГО ГОСУДАРСТВЕННОГО ПЕДАГОГИЧЕСКОГО УНИВЕРСИТЕТА

КЛЮЧЕВЫЕ СЛОВА: лидерство, образование, подготовка, противоречия и риски, структурная модель, кластер.

АННОТАЦИЯ. В статье обсуждаются тенденции развития педагогического образования и описываются особенности подготовки лидеров образования на основе опыта Уральского государственного педагогического университета (УрГПУ). Выделяются достижения и особенности инновационного развития университета. Дается анализ причин актуализации педагогического образования, обосновывается необходимость модернизации педагогического образования и подготовки лидеров образования с учетом противоречивых результатов предшествующих лет и современных трендов в образовании. Необходимость преобразований рассматривается в широком социальном и образовательном контексте. Отмечается, что лидерами могут быть не только отдельные руководители или профессионалы, но и целые организации. Существуют различные теории и схемы подготовки лидеров образования. Предлагаемая нами модель тесно связана с практической задачей профессиональной подготовки. Эта модель соединяет в себе два вида подготовки лидеров образования – административную и профессиональную, основой которой является гармония и комбинация вариаций с учетом культурной составляющей лидера. С этой позиции определяется статус педагогического университета, направления влияния педагогического университета на разные сферы социальной и культурной жизни региона, его взаимодействия с социально-культурными структурами региона как ключевого образовательного кластера.

Introduction

For a long time a scientific study of the leadership phenomenon has been studied from the philosophical and sociological viewpoints. A leader was considered to be equal to an administrator having power and authority; becoming a leader was thought of as a passport for opportunity. Leadership nature as a social phenomenon was scarcely investigated.

Assumptions

The first two decades of the twenty-first century have seen significant changes at all levels of educational activities for the Russian system of education and the teacher as its key figure.

The “accounting period” set to accomplish modernization of all educational institutes by 2010 is over, but the principal trends of their transformation and development are still in

action. There is no more time to speak, but time to act. The current situation is complicated by the fact that all current developments in the field of education receive mixed reactions from the public and pedagogic community alike. It is the teacher and pedagogic education that face the most serious public complaints. [1; 2].

There is a certain aura of myths around common perception of pedagogical education to be overcome by all who are involved in that sphere. Little demand of its products downplays the necessity of pedagogical education content and its specific forms of organization and develops 'a feeling of quasi-conviction' in its optional character. In other words, an illusion appears that anyone is able and is knowledgeable enough to teach.

This situation is caused by the attitude to the said education in modern Russia: it is not treated as an instrumental value, as a means to achieve something that lies above teaching (career, high social rank, material benefits, etc.). In many cases the said education is just a means to get a diploma of higher education. But insufficient instrumentalization prevents pedagogical education from taking its rightful place as an end-in-itself within the set of terminal (ultimate, core) values. This imbalance of values should be overcome so as not to replace the significance of education with the significance of a diploma.

The activities of educators, from a school-teacher or a college professor to a university rector, are marked by postponed results and quasi-competent consumers of their services. Hence, teachers find it hard to live up to the public's expectations; there is a popular belief that one should be a good teacher against all odds, notwithstanding social changes, national policy, or the profession's economic status.

So, within this social and cultural context, how should we go on with modernization of pedagogical education to combine the criteria of quality, availability, and efficiency with the key moments of today's development – innovation, mobility, competitiveness, multifacetedness?

The ultimate success of the educational institution's policy is highly dependent on its head's risk-taking skills and abilities to find contradictions and problem areas by uniting their team's efforts. We'd like to give some examples of such actions taken by USPU rector which were instrumental in achieving the results outlined in the university's development strategy 2020 [3].

1. Adverse labor market conditions, where it is difficult to make any reliable predictions, and unstable regional demand for certain professions required a more profound analysis of supply and demand for education workers. There was no statistical or demographic evidence for an excess supply of lawyers, economists, managers, and

teachers, but this idea imposed on the public affected the choices of prospective students and graduates' prospects nevertheless.

A long-term economic forecast was required to avoid disproportions between economic and social needs of the region (state interests), life prospects of graduates of various educational programs (personal interests) and the quality of educational services provided by the university (interests of employers and other consumer groups). We found such a forecast essential to realize the conception of education for an innovation society and the knowledge-based economy in the Urals region.

Besides, education grant programs for innovation activities have been designed and implemented to ensure employment of our graduates in other social spheres along education where their competences in psychology, pedagogy, conflictology, humanities, etc. are in great demand. This claim is sustained by long-term research of USPU graduates' careers in various fields of human relations, in socially significant activities.

2. There is still an unabridged gap between the graduates' professional traits and competencies outlined by the Federal State Educational Standards, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, what their prospective employers in various spheres require. "Consumers" are sometimes dissatisfied with the quality of young specialists. The interaction arrangements between the university and its employment partners potentially engaged in the institution's policy-making and making the regional order for preparing graduates, did not work on a regular basis, apart from the active programs of cooperation with educational boards.

This academic year, contracts between the University and the Ministry of Physical Culture, Sport and Youth Policy, the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Social Policy in the Urals region were signed. It means long-term partnership in preparation and employment of specialists for economics, culture, and social policy of the region.

3. The deflection of the graduates from the profession – their desire to change an occupation – is also connected with a change of priorities among young people, their evaluation of education capital accumulated during their studentship. However, it is in many ways dependent on the quality indicators of the university's staff potential.

Materials and Discussion

There are three factors to consider in understanding the setting of the leadership problem: (a) changes in the socio-professional situation; (b) realization of insufficiency of traditional and institutionalized relations "administration – submittance – result," "professional status – right and ability to educate"; (c) arising necessity

in knowing “basic” strength of an educational establishment, strong and weak points of its staff under exact functional role and personal context. Analysis of these factors may be used as the basis of organization development [4; 5].

There are two approaches to understand the leadership in education:

- leadership as managing and guiding the education;
- leadership as a higher level of professional pedagogics.

In both cases leadership is the result of achieving of the following objectives:

1. Exact socio-professional situation, demanding non-standard, leader’s influence;
2. Presence of individuals with an adequate leader’s potential;
3. Comprehension and confirmation of groups involved in the situation.

To influence and engage the group, the leadership candidate must possess

- 1) subjective determination on leadership, need for success;

2) concept-evaluative professional strategy accounting the normative, basic and ideal models of the profession;

3) a certain leadership potential, a set of qualities:

- attitude towards labor as independent value;
- ability to collaborate, will-power, level of conflictness;
- extra-standard thinking, developed intellectual;
- organizing, communicative and professional abilities.

Stephen R. Covey considered that most effective leaders should be proactive; seek first to understand, than to be understood; synergize; focus on missions and strategies for achieving them; identify and develop new talents; recognize and reward significant contributions, design jobs to make them meaningful and challenging [6; 7].

In balancing and connecting these elements we can now define the actual basic model:

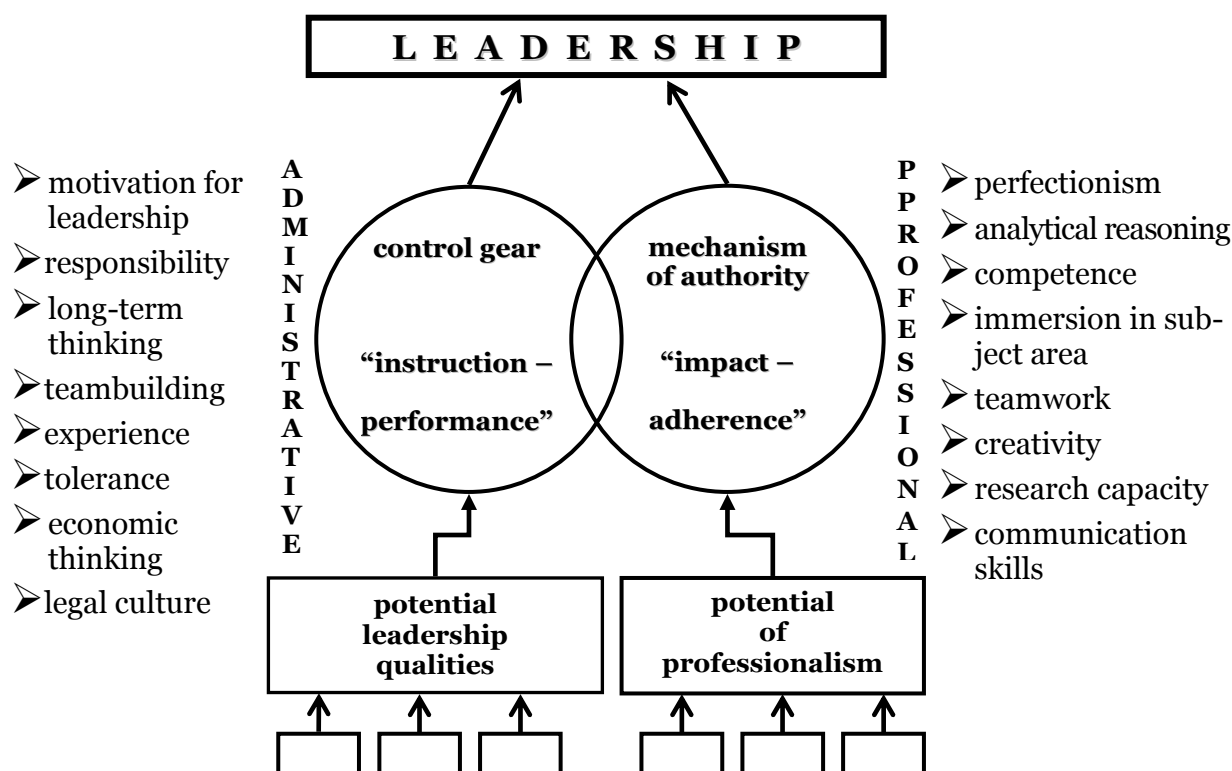


Chart 1

We assume that a balance between these aspects is important. A leader’s style is to a large extent a reflection of his/her value system and core beliefs. Many continuing efforts are made to educate students of leadership in the traits of what has been determined as the style of successful leaders. To increase their effectiveness more attention needs to be given to the significance of the culture of an organization.

USPU enforces focused staff policy, in

compliance with relevant technical regulations and provisions of law, which preserves leadership potential of its employees and implements a leadership development program for the regional system of education.

We develop this trend by putting together two aspects of leadership – administrative based on regulatory bodies, and professional based on authority, trust, and impact on one’s followers.

USPU Institute of Personnel Administra-

tion prepares leading managers for various pedagogic intuitions in a number of bachelor's and master's programs. Some other institutions and faculties enacted leadership-promoting programs for prospective educational workers [8]. It is our firm belief that a focus on leadership culture is important for their preparation.

Taking into account a certain gender disproportion in the staff and students of the pedagogical university, we make a greater focus on balance and equality between male and female leadership strategies, preparedness for administrative leadership, etc., than on their differences in absence or presence of leadership qualities. Though we consider that women-leaders possess unique feminine qualities as emotionality, reactivity, compassion, desire for harmony that work synergistically with their leadership skills in solving problems, with aid of their subordinates (administrative leadership) and while positively influencing their potential followers (professional leadership). All in all, the culture of leadership is based on gender culture as a certain set of norms and values building cooperation on principles of equality, solidarity, partnership. It is manifested through a sum of cultural universals, represented by common core values in various spheres of life.

It is essential for leadership in education that this sum should include not only common social, humanitarian and scientific research culture, but culture of ethics, aesthetics, law, politics, ecology, linguistics, information technologies, and, the most important in modern society, cross-cultural communication. To quote Vince Lombardi "Leaders aren't born, they are made. And they are made just like anything else, through hard work. And that's the price we'll have to pay to achieve that goal, or any goal." [9] Development of leaders in education is no exception. The task of the educational leader is to nurture the establishment and its participants through this process toward the development of integration and equilibrium.

Not only professionals or administrators can be leaders, but educational institutions as well. USPU is an acknowledged pedagogical university of the Ural region, a center of science, education and culture. In spite of being teacher training oriented, within the last several years university has gained the status of a classic multiple-discipline higher educational establishment. Nowadays, the proportion of non-major programs at USPU constitutes up to 46.5% of its pedagogic programs.

The USPU strategic goal is to apply the maximum of its scientific and research potential in the educational process, to develop prior fundamental research projects and satisfy interests of all consumers of educational services by means of applied research. This goal is

achieved via support of existing academic school, development of new prospective research projects, development of the university's intellectual property security system, an increase in science and research funding from secondary sources, improvement of the competitive ability and a raise in demand for USPU faculty science and research results in the region, the Russian Federation, and international academic society [10; 11].

USPU graduates are professionally mobile specialists, with an education of such level and content that allows them to find a job in any field: education, science, arts, politics, economics and business, state management, service and entertainment, sports, IT, etc. In its many years of operation the university has prepared 75 thousand specialists of the highest qualification. Many generations of talented teachers have graduated from USPU and now work in schools of the Sverdlovsk oblast, in Russia and the world, keeping the university's traditions and honing their professional skills.

Through all its stages of development the university kept up with the times, successfully tackling challenges of educational and scientific activity. The previous development of USPU resulted in a powerful educational, scientific, and cultural potential that helps solve large-scale problems, following the university's mission of multiplying Russia's intellectual potential, maintaining and enriching its intellectual elite considering time demands. In USPU all necessary conditions for development of students' intellectual and creative abilities, formation of their self-education and self-realization skills and their creative independence, are provided.

The principle modern strategy of the university's development is active participation in realization of federal educational and scientific programs, a ready response to current requirements, training of sought after, mobile and creative specialists. New challenges in education call for new trends. Nowadays the cluster of pedagogical education might become an essential element of the regional innovative system of education due to a number of reasons [12].

The ideas represented in the functional model, in its turn, are connected with the structural organization that provides conditions for the realization of general and specific goals of innovative education. The set of function characteristics changes due to the specificity of the institutional character of education. In the process of social change new tasks and functions connected with its modernization are added to the universal constants of education. Very often these new tasks are of a situational character or they are directions that are considered to be priorities in the changing socio-cultural context. Without going into the details of scientific dis-

course, regarding pedagogical education, we can define these functions as stable directions of influence of this education on main spheres of public development, each of which has structural active tasks, social orders.

W. E. Deming, a leading proponent of quality “professionalism in education” wrote: “A system must be managed, it will not manage itself. By focusing on a system of quality, everybody wins” [13].

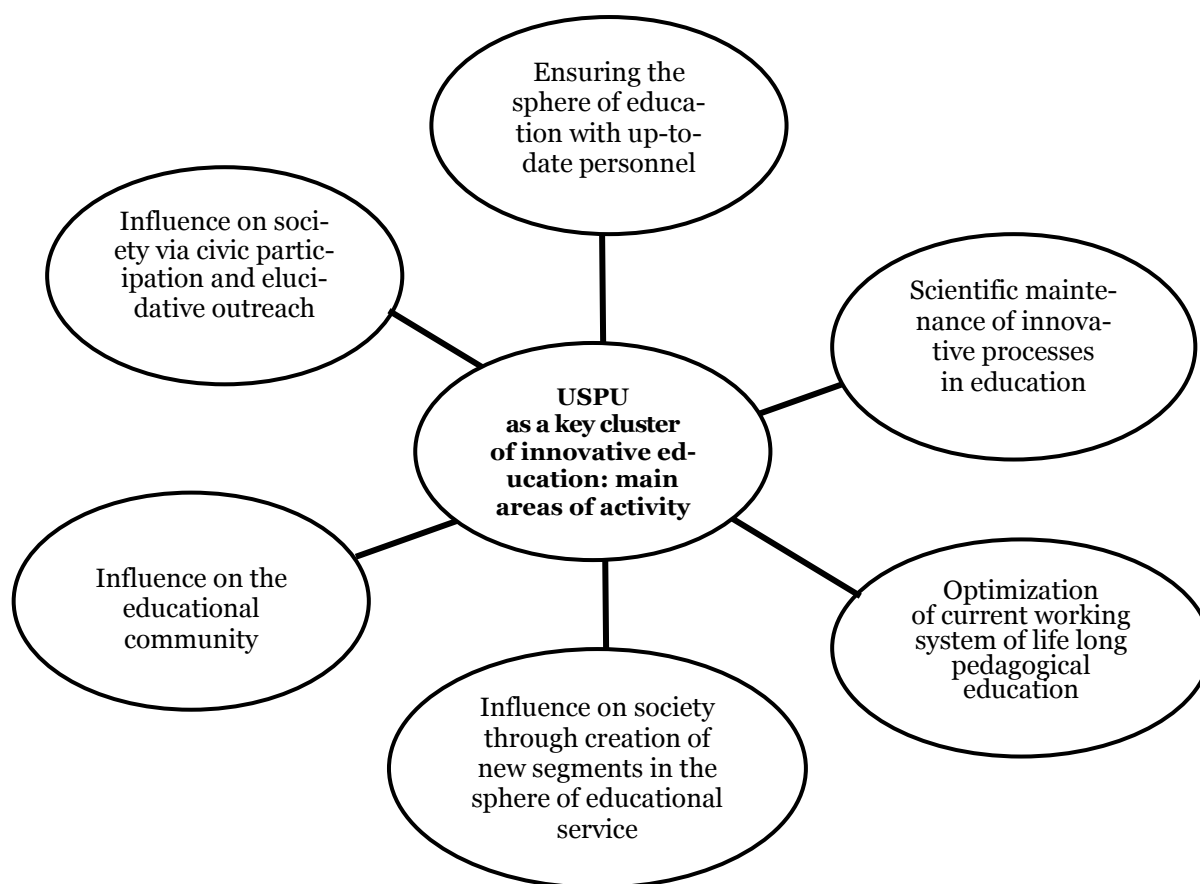


Chart 2. The Functional Model of the Regional Center of Pedagogical Education

These days, the new purpose-oriented program of development of education in Russian Federation aimed at 2018 is being introduced and realized. USPU has a great intellectual, scientific and cultural potential. In contrast to universities with a history of many hundreds of years, this university, its staff and administration, haven't had centuries to make the transformation processes and bring the university to the lead. Nevertheless, in 2012, 2013 and 2014, according to the results of ratings, USPU is one of the most effective pedagogical universities. This is not by chance; rather it is the result of goal-oriented work by the university's team.

The achievement of these outcomes became possible due to a high level of managerial culture of the university, based on the principles of goal-setting, coordination, subordination, development, control, motivation.

The strategy of innovative development is based on the realization of human potential, on one hand, and on the investment in "human capital", on the other. Innovative activity in the

educational regional cluster is systematic and is realized in connection with the regional educational system. The main institutional role of education, including the pedagogical one, is to support the integrity and stability of society in the process of its transformation. In this sense education fulfills its classic functions – academic, humanistic, social, distributive, economic, and political [14; 15].

The creation and development of the infrastructure, innovative transformations in structure and content of the teaching process, cooperation with regional and federal government, development strategies and mechanisms combined, have allowed the university's administrators to aptly bring the university to the lead of higher education in Russia. The system of training at USPU is aimed at meeting the requirements of students as to knowledge, employment guarantees, freedom and initiative in choosing their profession. USPU has built up a well thought integral – through innovative training and resource, research and development, social and cultural environment fit to

provide training of highly qualified professionals oriented toward dealing with problems of the Ural Region and Russia.

Conclusion

To successfully implement its mission over the next four years, USPU defined priorities that became the basis of all practical activities aimed at meeting our goals.

USPU has a research agenda that promotes and supports the development, conduct and dissemination of new knowledge, best practice and the validation of innovative and effective instructional practices. USPU has developed a "university culture" in which faculty, staff, and students feel involved, supported, and successful in progressing toward respective professional and/or academic goals. Alongside the structural re-organization we have found a variety of projects aimed at international integration of university education, working out common approaches, philosophy, prospective models, priorities, goals and content of university education. Aligning teaching principles at universities in different countries, creation of an integrated educational environment based on humanistic traditions of various schooling systems, and the tendency of humanity to maintain dialogue, have formed the grounds for formation of a global community responsible for occurrences on our planet.

Providing high quality educational services, USPU creates the necessary conditions for formation of graduates with market mobility, their successful completion of education

with a view of achieving confidence within the constantly changing world and making a contented life, based on effective realization of professional and social competences gained.

To achieve synergetic effect in resource support of leadership development in all its hypostases we consider it necessary to use the network form of implementation of educational programs. For USPU the network cooperation is already a reality with concrete results and a possibility to interact with other educational organizations.

Generally speaking, productivity, creativity and innovation are coming about more rapidly within organizations where employees have been empowered to make a difference. It cannot be reasonably expected that there will be any sudden all-encompassing transformations in the model of education that operates within Russian universities. The essential thing now is to maintain a spirit of open-mindedness; the essential element in this process is not a specific procedure, but an attitude. Knowing that we can make a difference in this world is a great motivator. How can we know this and not be involved?

The process of the education of the individual in the modern world will never be complete. Even if we were able to completely modernize education today, tomorrow we would have to modernize it again because by then the world would be a different place. "The highest education is that which does not merely give us information but makes our life in harmony with all existence." Rabindranath Tagore.

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